

Form and Tonality

in J. S. Bach's Settings of

Jesu, der du meine Seele

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The German tradition of sacred chorale melody was deeply ingrained in the minds and ears of Lutheran congregations from the mid-sixteenth century until the demise of the Kapellmeister approximately two centuries later. The possibility of a familiar musical element permitting a wide variety of treatments inspired a large repertoire of chorale based music. On the surface, text and melody create an accessible guide to formal design. At deeper levels, comparison between simple and complex settings can reveal striking similarities in the background and middleground structures.

J.S. Bach's six settings of the chorale Jesu, der du meine Seele provide opportunity for such comparisons. In addition to the three four-part settings of the Choralgesange [#185-187], the chorale is set for four-part chorus with three obbligato strings in movement VI of Cantata #105, Herr, gehe nicht ins Gericht mit deinem Knecht, in 1723, and twice in Cantata #78, Jesu, der du meine Seele, in 1724. Cantata #78 concludes with a four-part setting in movement VII, which contrasts with the large concerto structure that surrounds the chorale in the first movement.

The twelve stanza text, which originally appeared in Johann Rist's Himmlische Lieder of 1641, was combined with the melody of a secular song "Daphnis ging fur wenig Tagen"

in Nicholas Stenger's Christlichneuvermehrt und gebessertes Gesaangbuch of 1663.¹

Each of the twelve stanzas contain eight lines of text. The stanzas have a trochaic meter and are divided by the rhyme scheme into a quatrain and two couplets. (See Example 1.)

Example 1. Poetic Structure of Rist's
Jesu, der du meine Seele.

| | ---Quatrain--- | | | | Couplet | | Couplet | |
|-------------------|----------------|---|---|---|---------|---|---------|---|
| <i>Rhyme:</i> | M | N | M | N | O | O | P | P |
| <i>Syllables:</i> | 8 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7 |

The music setting casts each stanza in a bar form, with the first quatrain divided in half to correspond to the two Stollen. The Abgesang contains both couplets, with the two lines of the first couplet set in a melodic sequence to reinforce the rhyme scheme. (See Example 2.)

J. S. Bach's six settings display considerable alterations in the chorale melody. In the Stollen and the first couplet of the Abgesang, three types of modification are present: altered pitches to overcome modal implications of the original chorale, embellishment with non-harmonic tones, and lengthened rhythmic values at cadences. (See Example 3.) For example, the head-tone 5 is repeated at the onset to permit the composing-out of the tonic triad. At the conclusion of the first phrase a, agogic stress combined with a melodic anticipation emphasizes 2-1 and the V-i cadence. The second phrase removes the eighth note decorations and simplifies the melody into a descending third followed by an ascending third. This creates stronger harmonic implications because the two unfolded thirds compose-out the tonic and dominant.

An interesting combination of modal and tonal implications are inherent in the Abgesang. (See Example 4.) The tonal motion consists of a phrase that cadences in the subtonic followed by its restatement a perfect fourth higher in the relative major. Consequently the subtonic functions as a tonal cell in the modal region of VII, but also at a

¹Charles Sanford Terry, Bach's Chorals (sic), vol. 2: The Hymns and Hymn Melodies in the Cantatas and Motets (Cambridge: University Press, 1917), pp. 88-89.

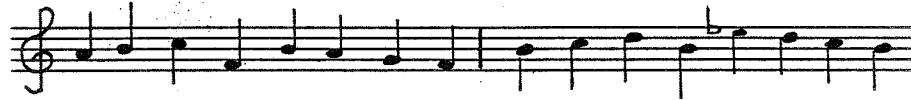
Example 2. Melodic Structure of the Chorale
Jesu, der du meine Seele.

Stollen I and II



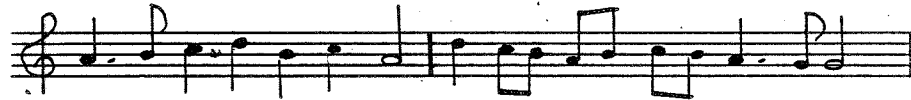
| | | |
|---------|---|---|
| Rhyme: | M | N |
| Phrase: | a | b |

Abgesang (1st Couplet)



| | | |
|---------|---|----------------|
| Rhyme: | O | O |
| Phrase: | c | c ¹ |

(2nd Couplet)



| | | |
|---------|---|---|
| Rhyme: | p | p |
| Phrase: | d | e |

deeper level as the dominant of the relative major. Bach systematically exploits the juxtaposition of the tonic minor, its relative major, and their dominants in all six settings.

Modifications of the final couplet may be divided into two groups. The three settings of the Choralgesange follow the original melody by moving from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{2}$ in phrase d, but modify phrase e with a motion from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{1}$. In contrast, the three settings in the Cantatas vary phrase d by means of a circular motion around $\hat{5}$, and conclude with a descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{1}$ in phrase e that is similar to the original version. (See Example 5.)

Analysis of the seventh movement of Cantata #78 reveals interesting parallels between form at the surface and the underlying structure. In the Stollen, the background line descends to $\hat{2}$, with interruption marking the binary division of the bar form. The descent is supported by a twice articulated tonic to dominant motion with unfolded thirds in the chorale melody. (See Example 6.)

Example 3. Comparison of the Original Version
and Bach's Six Settings of Jesu,
der du meine Seele, Phrases a and b.

Original version

Choralgesänge #185

Choralgesänge #186

Choralgesänge #187

Cantata #78, Mvt. VII

Cantata #78, Mvt. I

Cantata #105, Mvt. VI

The first phrase of the Abgesang prolongs $\hat{2}$ from the dominant to VII. The subtonic is tonicized by I-V-I in F major, which supports a middleground third-line from a^1 to f^1 . The second phrase re-establishes d^2 as the structural background pitch, but the recovery occurs in the relative major. The motion I-V-I in B^b supports a middleground descent from d^2 to b^{b1} , producing a strong parallel between the middleground motion of both phrases. (See Example 7.)

The first couplet of the Abgesang (mm. 7-12) contains the

Example 4. Comparison of the Original Version and Bach's Settings of Jesu, der du meine Seele, Phrases c and c^I.

Original version

Choralgesänge #185

Choralgesänge #186

Choralgesänge #187

Cantata #78, Mvt. VII

Cantata #78, Mvt. I

Cantata #105, Mvt. VI

harmonic support V-VII-III at the background. When viewed in B^b as III-V-I, a significant correspondence is formed with the background of the final couplet: III-V-I in g minor. (See Example 8.)

The setting of the chorale in Cantata #105, mvt. VI, is structurally very similar to the four-part setting in movement VII of Cantata #78. The most interesting variant is a three-part string obbligato that fills out the harmony and provides a decorative connection between each phrase. Another modification that does not alter the deep structure

Example 5. Comparison of the Original Version
and Bach's Six Settings of Jesu,
der du meine Seele, Phrases d and e.

Original version

Choralgesänge #185

Choralgesänge #186

Choralgesänge #187

Cantata #78, Mvt. VII

Cantata #78, Mvt. I

Cantata #105, Mvt. VI

is the off-tonic opening in B^b , which connects with the B^b tonic of the preceding tenor aria "Kann ich mit Jesum mir zum Freunde Machen?" to the chorale. (See Example 9.)

The three chorales of the Choralgesänge have virtually identical deep structures. The settings of the Stollen share many details with the seventh movement of Cantata #78. At the background, 4 is unfolded over the bass motion from IV^6 to V, and the upward unfolding of 3 is supported by a rising octave. All four settings conclude the Stollen with the interruption of the background line at 2.

Example 6. Cantata #78, Movement, VII,
Foreground of mm. 1-6.

Example 10 indicates that the correlation of background and middleground structures are identical in all four versions until the conclusion of the first couplet (phrases c and c¹) of the Abgesang. At this junction, the difference in chorale melody creates a profound impact on the middleground. In the Choralgesange settings, the descending line in phrase c¹ is connected to 2 at the beginning of phrase d, which forms a line of the fourth. In contrast, the third-line in Cantata #78, movement VII, is followed by a prolongation of 5 at the middleground throughout phrase d. To facilitate comparison, the g minor setting (Choralgesange #186) will be considered in relation to Cantata #78, movement VII. (See Example 11.)

The final descent of the background line in Cantata #78 occurs in phrase e and is very direct and simple. Choralgesange #186 has a more complicated descent through both phrases d and e. This descent begins with the unfolding of 4 by thirds into an inner voice, followed by another unfolding upward to 3. Consequently the final pair of phrases in Choralgesange is related to the Stollen by the gradual descent in unfolding thirds, and to phrases c and c¹

Example 7. Cantata #78, movement VII,
Foreground of mm. 7-12.

9 3d 11 5 3d

5-10 6-10 6-5 8 6 8 10-6-5 8

g: V VII [V] VII III [V] III
[Bb: III V [V] V I V I

in the Abgesang by the motion III-V-I at the background.²

The dichotomy of sacred text combined with secular music found in the original chorale is magnified in the first movement of Cantata #78 by the incorporation of the chorale into a larger concerto grosso structure. The chorale appears once in its entirety as a cantus firmus in long note values scored for sopranos doubled by a horn at the unison and by a flute at the octave. Despite the fact that the chorale tune bears little resemblance to the lower, faster moving parts, and is present in only 36 of the 144 measures, it creates the underlying bar form structure common to all of Bach's settings. (See Example 12.)

Two significant ritornello themes are stated at the onset, as shown in Example 13. Theme 1a is reminiscent of a sarabande with the characteristic agogic stress on the second beat, a quality common to all the material of the Stollen except the chorale itself.

Theme 1b, a cliché chromatic ground bass figure, is treated in a highly original manner. (See Example 14.) Not

²It was previously stated that the background structure of phrases c and c¹ could be viewed as III-V-I in the relative major.

Example 8. Cantata #78, Movement VII,
Foreground of mm. 13-16.

Handwritten numbers below the treble staff: 10-6-5, 6-10, 6-8, 5-10, 5-10, 6-5.

Handwritten Roman numerals below the bass staff: III, V, i, V_6^5 , i, V, i.

only does it occur relentlessly in the two Stollen, appearing in upper voices when the bass drops out at mm. 9-16 (and the corresponding section from mm. 41-48 in Stolle II), but generates a series of imitative choral entries displaying decoration (mm. 17-20 and mm. 48-52) and melodic inversion (mm. 25-28 and mm. 57-60).

One of the most remarkable aspects found in mm. 21-24 is the contrapuntal combination of both ritornello themes with the chorale. Several rhythmic factors thrust the chorale phrase into greater prominence. The initial downbeat accent and the trochaic pattern of the chorale, followed by hemiola at the cadence, define a rhythmic strata that contrasts with the accented second beat in the other parts. These contrapuntal and rhythmic characteristics are displayed throughout the movement.

The polyphonic implications of the ritornello theme 1a have a fascinating effect on the middleground structure. The first pair of phrases displays a line from 5 to 1 occurring in two descending thirds. In the context of the cadences, two different interpretations of the compound melody cause an interesting reversal of structural and non-structural pitches. The first phrase descends from 5 to 3,

Example 9. Cantata #105, Movement VI, mm. 1-6.

CHORAL. (Melodie: „Jesu, der du meine Seele.“ Siebenstimmig.)

The score is for a seven-part choral setting. It features a piano accompaniment with a complex, rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more melodic line in the left hand. The vocal parts are arranged in four staves, with the top two staves representing the soprano and alto parts, and the bottom two staves representing the tenor and bass parts. The lyrics are in German and are repeated across the four vocal staves. The score is divided into two systems, each containing three measures. The first system covers measures 1-3, and the second system covers measures 4-6. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The piano accompaniment is written in a style that suggests a harpsichord or a similar keyboard instrument. The vocal parts are written in a style that suggests a choral setting. The lyrics are: "Nun, ich weiss, du wirst mir stil- - - len" and "mein Ge- - wis - sen, das mich plagt. Es wird".

Nun, ich weiss, du wirst mir stil- - - len

Nun, ich weiss, du wirst mir stil- - - len

Nun, ich weiss, du wirst mir stil- - - len

Nun, ich weiss, du wirst mir stil- - - len

5 7 6 6 6 5 6 #

mein Ge- - wis - sen, das mich plagt. Es wird

mein Ge- - wis - sen, das mich plagt. Es wird

mein Ge- - wis - sen, das mich plagt. Es wird

mein Ge- - wis - sen, das mich plagt. Es wird

6 # 6 # 6 # 6

Example 10. Comparison of Middleground Structures,
Choralgesänge #185-187 and Cantata #78,
Movement VII.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Jesu, der du meine Seele". It is organized into four systems, each consisting of a vocal line (treble clef) and a basso continuo line (bass clef). The score is divided into four measures, each marked with a Roman numeral (I, II, III, IV) and a key signature change (from C major to D major, then to E major, and finally to F major). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Above the vocal line, there are fingerings (e.g., 5, 4, 3, 2, 1) and breath marks (e.g., 3d, 4d). The basso continuo line features figured bass notation (e.g., i, V, i, VII, III, V, i, V, I) and various musical symbols. The overall structure is a comparison of middleground structures across different movements and pieces.

Example 11. Comparison of Choralgesänge #186 and Cantata #78, Movement VII,
 Foreground of Phrases c¹, d and e.

Choralgesänge #186

Phrase: c¹ d e

Cantata #78
 movement VII

Example 12. Form of Cantata #78, Movement I.

Stolle I (mm. 1-36)

| | | | | |
|------------|--------|------------------|--------|------------------|
| Ritornello | Chorus | Chorale <u>a</u> | Chorus | Chorale <u>b</u> |
| 1-16 | 17-20 | 21-24 | 25-32 | 33-36 |

Stolle II (mm. 37-72)

| | | | | | |
|------------|--------|------------------|--------|------------------|------------|
| Ritornello | Chorus | Chorale <u>a</u> | Chorus | Chorale <u>b</u> | Ritornello |
| 37-48 | 48-52 | 53-56 | 57-64 | 65-68 | 69-72 |

Abgesang (mm. 73-144)

| | | | | | |
|---------|------------------|------------|---------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Chorus | Chorale <u>c</u> | Ritornello | Chorus | Chorale <u>c</u> ¹ | Ritornello |
| 73-80 | 81-84 | 85-88 | 89-94 | 95-98 | 99-106 |
| Chorus | Chorale <u>d</u> | Ritornello | Chorus | Chorale <u>e</u> | Ritornello |
| 107-117 | 118-121 | 122-138 | 129-136 | 137-140 | 141-144 |

Example 13. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Ritornello Themes.

while a subordinate step progression descends from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$. In mm. 5-8 $b\hat{b}^1$ ($\hat{3}$ at the middleground) is transferred an octave higher and descends through the unfolded $\hat{2}$ above a secondary motion from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$. (See Example 15.)

When the chorus enters at m. 17, the middleground line

Example 14. Cantata #78, Movement I, mm. 15-27.

Theme 1b with decoration and imitation

Je - su, der du mei - ne See - le

Je - su, der du mei - ne

Theme 1a

Melodie: „Jesu, der du meine Seele“

Chorale a

Theme 1b inverted

Je - su, der du mei - ne See - le

le, Je - su, der du mei - ne See - le hast durch dei - nen bit - tern

See - le, Je - su, der du mei - ne See - le hast durch dei - nen

Je - su, der du mei - ne See - le

Theme 1b

Example 15. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Foreground of mm. 1-9.

remains embedded in the contrapuntally overlapping orchestral parts. This occurs against a rising diatonic bass line that will dominate the Abgesang. The entry of the chorale at m. 21 displays a deep structure that is identical to the four-part setting in movement VII, with the surrounding ritornello material providing interesting connections between chorale phrases. In Stolle I, the first chorale phrase descends from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$. The chromatic theme 1b, melodically inverted and imitated, supports a prolongation of $\hat{3}$ through embellished parallel tenths. After theme 1b occurs in the subdominant region, the second chorale phrase ends strongly on $\hat{2}$ at m. 37 to conclude the five-line. (See Example 16.)

Stolle II subtly varies Stolle I. The opening ritornello of Stolle II is only four bars long because the first four bars were concealed under the preceding chorale phrase. This displacement causes the sections of Stolle II to occur four bars earlier than their counterparts in Stolle I. Another modification of note is the restatement of mm. 9-16 in invertible counterpoint at mm. 41-48. The truncated ritornello has great impact on the middleground, which never descends to $\hat{1}$. Mm. 37-52 lack adequate harmonic support for $\hat{2}$ necessary to form a five-line. The conclusion of Stolle II differs radically from its counterpart because the line formed by the chorale melody is now a background line. $\hat{2}$ at

Example 16. Cantata #78, Movement I, Foreground of Mm. 1-37.

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with a Treble and Bass staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various musical symbols such as accidentals, dynamics, and articulation marks. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 12, 17, 21, 24, 29, 33, and 37 indicated in boxes. The notation includes various musical symbols such as accidentals, dynamics, and articulation marks.

Measure numbers and other markings visible in the score include:

- Measure 12: Treble staff, measure 12; Bass staff, measure 12.
- Measure 17: Treble staff, measure 17; Bass staff, measure 17.
- Measure 21: Treble staff, measure 21; Bass staff, measure 21.
- Measure 24: Treble staff, measure 24; Bass staff, measure 24.
- Measure 29: Treble staff, measure 29; Bass staff, measure 29.
- Measure 33: Treble staff, measure 33; Bass staff, measure 33.
- Measure 37: Treble staff, measure 37; Bass staff, measure 37.

the background is supported by a long dominant prolongation over a pedal point. The dominant undergoes mutation from \hat{D} major to d minor as a middleground five-line descends from 2 in mm. 69-73. (See Example 17.)

The Abgesang begins in m. 73, marking the midpoint of the movement. Aside from the initial use of minor v rather than major V, the Abgesang displays the same key scheme as the four-part settings. At m. 81, $\hat{2}$ is supported by a pair of middleground third-lines. Chorale phrase \underline{c} pivots from d minor to F major, with the descent to f beneath overlapping instrumental parts. The most significant overlap is an octave transfer of $\hat{2}$, which serves as the background for the descending third-line in the ritornello from mm. 85-89. (See Example 18.)

M. 89 occurs in the Fibonacci series, and as the golden section of the total length of 144 bars. In addition to the cadence completing the descent to f^2 , two other important gestures emphasize this division: the chorus enters on a downbeat for the first time, shifting the stress from the second beat to the first, and the relentless theme $\underline{1b}$ finally subsides.

When chorale phrase \underline{c}^1 enters at m. 95, several factors suggest that d^2 is recovered as the structural background pitch even though it is not aurally prominent. The harmonic motion V-i in g minor, followed by the relative major functioning as a tonic substitution, suggests 5 instead of the incompatible 2 at the background. 5 is present both as an overtone and in the surrounding chords. The middleground motion to b^{b1} in m. 99 requires and supports 5 at the background. The ritornello follows by reiterating the third-line in B^b major. (See Example 19.)

From m. 104 to the conclusion, the only significant tonal motion is generated by the chorale. Several gestures appear at the foreground including the rising diatonic bass line that initially appeared in m. 17. Contrapuntal patterns resulting from melodic sequences include the interval pattern 5-6-5-10 between outer voices that forms a motion to g minor without the rhythmic emphasis of a strong cadence. (See Example 20.) At m. 118, chorale phrase \underline{d} clearly establishes g minor and 5 with a motion from tonic to the dominant. After a prolongation of V over a pedal, contrapuntal sequences based on a 7-5-10 pattern delay the resolution to tonic which occurs with the choral entry at m. 129. (See Example 21.)

The opening ritornello gestures return at m. 136 and gain intensity as the chorale melody enters a beat later. The background descends to 1 and is followed by a weak third descent in the concluding ritornello section, as shown in Example 22. In sum, the middleground and background structure of the Abgesang is merely an expansion of the structure displayed in movement VII. (See Example 11.)

Example 17. Cantata #78, Movement I, Ursatz of mm. 1-72.

Example 17. Cantata #78, Movement I, Ursatz of mm. 1-72.

Stolle I Ritornello [9] Chorus [17] Chorale: a [21]

[25] Chorus [33] Chorale: b [37] Stolle II Ritornello

[49] Chorus [53] Chorale: a [57] Chorus [65] Chorale: b [69] Ritornello

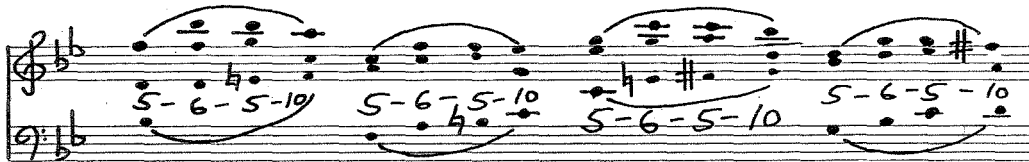
Example 18. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Ursatz of mm. 73-89.

Example 18 is a musical score for the Ursatz of mm. 73-89. It features two staves, treble and bass, in a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into sections: [73] Chorus, [81] Chorale: c, [85] Ritornello, and [89]. The Chorus section (mm. 73-80) includes a 2-measure rest and a 3d measure. The Chorale section (mm. 81-84) includes a 3d measure. The Ritornello section (mm. 85-88) includes a 3d measure. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Below the staves, there are Roman numerals: [V] V, [V] VII, [V] VII, and [V] VII.

Example 19. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Foreground of mm. 93-103.

Example 19 is a musical score for the Foreground of mm. 93-103. It features two staves, treble and bass, in a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Above the staves, there are Roman numerals: 5, 3d, 5, and 3d.

Example 20. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Foreground of mm. 103-108.



Example 21. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Foreground of mm. 118-129.

Heinrich Schenker's motto was "Sempre idem sed non eodem modo," always the same idea, but not the same way. Bach's six settings of Jesu, der du meine Seele clearly exhibit similar structures achieved through varied designs. In the Stollen and the first half of Abgesang, structural pitches occur in identical locations with similar harmonic support. Modifications of the chorale melody in the final pair of phrases divide the settings into two groups. The versions of the Choralgesange display identical deep structures that

Example 22. Cantata #78, Movement I,
Ursatz of mm. 73-144.

73 Chorus

81 Chorale: c

85 Ritornello

89 Chorus

95 Chorale: c¹

99 Ritornello

103

107 Chorus

118 Chorale: d

122 Ritornello

129 Chorus

137 Chorale: e

140 Ritornello

Figured bass: 3d, 10, 5, 6, 10, 7, 10, 6

Figured bass: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Figured bass: 10, 10, 10

Figured bass: V, i, IV, 6, V, i, V, i

differ from the Cantata settings. Despite the different placement of structural pitches, the underlying harmonic basis is the same. The chorale and the middleground structures generated by it reflect the "semper idem" of Schenker's motto, while the differing temporal location and surface detail fulfill the clause "sed non eodem modo."

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